



THE  
CONDUCT  
OF THE  
MINISTRY

Impartially Examined.

IN A  
LETTER to the Merchants of LONDON.

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In a Letter to the Merchants of London.

London, Oct. 26, 1756.

GENTLEMEN,

**I** HAVE thought fit to address the following discourse to you, both as patrons and judges of it, for these reasons. My design being to enquire, without prejudice or affection, into the part Great Britain has acted since this

A 2

maritime

maritime war began, such an enquiry is most properly inscribed to a body of traders, who are so nearly concerned in it's success, and who have so considerable a share as well in our foreign as domestic commerce. You are likewise very capable to pronounce on the real merit of my undertaking; for many among you are men of a liberal education; of large and extensive views; who have studied and who understand the political system, not of this island only, but of Europe in general. Add to these things, that your residence in this great centre of business, your near and frequent opportunities of approaching those persons, who administer the public, give you a distinguished rank of consideration among your fellow-subjects. So that an appeal to you is, in effect, an appeal to the whole nation: and, as such, gentlemen, this is intended.

It is acknowledged, on all hands, that the present situation of our affairs is a very critical one. No man therefore, can be an indifferent spectator of it, who is not, at the same time, insensible to his most important interests, to the present age, and to posterity. We are all embarked in one political

political vessel, where, tho the steerage may be in other hands, the cargo is ours : and by consequence, while the storm is up, our lives and fortunes, our very being as well as safety, are exposed to the same common dangers, and must share the same general fate.

If this great crisis calls loudly upon us, to examine how we have been brought into it ; whether by real faults in our management, or by accidents unavoidable ; such is the excellence of our constitution, that we may enquire with the utmost freedom. This still is, may it ever continue to be, the birth-right of Englishmen ! But then,

That such an enquiry may be useful, it must be calm, dispassionate, impartial. As to the decency to be observed in examining the conduct of other men, of our superiors more particularly ; no one, who possesses and who is conscious he deserves the character of an honest man, will break through that boundary, which both reason and self-regard have established. Public order, private security, all the relations we stand in to one another, require that this fence should be preserved sacred and inviolate. From writers of a

different complexion, no man of sense can expect, and no man of honour would desire any thing else but scurrility and slander. Every knave, as well as every fool, is a leveller. Let not our own passions, much less the passions of such incendiaries (who write letters to the public, in the same view their less criminal brothers do to private men—that they may eat) inflame and mislead us. Let us not adopt that sinister zeal for the common welfare, which sometimes vents itself in vague, but furious declamations; sometimes in a malignant joy at public, tho inevitable misfortunes; and is ever dealing forth half truths, diminished or exaggerated, as may best serve the present purpose of malice, or levity, or revenge, or of all together. These volunteers in scandal, these little Drawcansirs, who are ever railing at their betters, only because they dare do it, were never more numerous in any age or country. They swarm by thousands in this great city: they infest every place of common resort, from the chocolate house to the night cellar; and having no business of their own, are constantly regulating that of the state. I have  
 seen

seen some of them reduced to spell the very names of those persons, they were beforehand resolved to abuse. Others, of more erudition, are daily pouring themselves out in lampoons, epigrams, advertisements, edicts. Never were the powers of dullness in greater or more universal commotion. Grub-street has not only sent abroad her own aboriginal poets and hawkers; but has likewise pressed into her service, as assistant draughtsmen, card-engravers, and gallows-makers, persons of another importance; who, tho' they have been humble enough, on this occasion, to wear her genuine livery, would yet think themselves injured in being supposed to assist her for hire or reward. Be then their decent and well-meant ingenuity it's own recompence; and the true motives that inspire it, their peculiar distinction! To be more serious. The productions, as such, of these men could not, it is allowed, merit even this short animadversion; did not the obvious tendency of them all, render it, in some sort, necessary. What that tendency is, every man amongst us, who is not the avowed enemy of all good discipline, of all political subordination, acknowledges and laments.

As to myself, gentlemen, I dare avow the honest ambition of differing totally from all such authors, in the scope and aim of this letter.—For my talent as a writer, every scribbler may place me in reputation, if he pleases, immediately below his fellow-dunce ; that is, immediately below nothing ; an ingenious device, which I have often known practised by the fraternity. But it shall not be in their power to prove me guilty of what is alone material for your consideration ; I mean, of intentionally asserting false facts, and of wilfully misrepresenting true ones.

I intend neither panegyric nor abuse ; and I have no cause to serve, but that of truth, and of my country. If, therefore, in the course of this address, I any where impose upon you ; I have been first, unknowingly, imposed upon myself. Be assured, however, that nothing in my power, has been left undone, to avoid this misfortune ; and that, on the contrary, I have exerted my best endeavours to procure every light, every information, which a private man could, by the most deliberate research, arrive at the knowledge of : and the result of this enquiry shall  
be,

be, fairly, produced to you. When you have examined with attention the facts I relate, and have coolly weighed their importance; you will then, gentlemen, determine equitably on the evidence before you: and the people of England will affirm your verdict.

But, before I enter upon this task, give me leave to take some little notice of a pamphlet, which has been just now put into my hands; and which, I am told, has met with attention from the public, on account, I imagine, of the facts it is supposed to contain; for surely if I, who am no author, may venture to pronounce on the stile and manner of writing, both are below criticism.

The charge opens against the ministry, or rather against truth and matter of fact, with the following narrative, which you shall have in his own words; as no other can be so fit to convey his meaning, and shew him in the true colours of a libeller.

“ In the year one thousand seven hundred and forty nine, or fifty, some American traders, subjects of the king of Great Britain, travelled to the borders

“ ders of the Ohio, to traffick with the  
 “ natives of those parts : this being  
 “ known to the Canadian French, messen-  
 “ gers were dispatched to acquaint them,  
 “ that, unless they withdrew from their  
 “ master’s territories, their effects would  
 “ be confiscated, and themselves carried  
 “ to prison at Quebec. This message the  
 “ traders thought fit to obey, and with-  
 “ drew in consequence of it.

“ The succeeding season, another com-  
 “ pany of British subjects came to trade  
 “ on the Ohio : and not withdrawing on  
 “ a like message with the former, their  
 “ goods were confiscated, and themselves  
 “ carried prisoners to Quebec, from whence  
 “ they were brought to Rochelle in France,  
 “ AND STILL DETAINED IN PRISON. Not  
 “ conscious of having violated the laws  
 “ of nations, or traded on any ground,  
 “ to which the king of Great Britain had  
 “ not an undoubted right, they *remon-*  
 “ *strated* to the British ministry, *insisted*  
 “ upon being claimed as British subjects,  
 “ and honourably discharged from prison,  
 “ as persons unoffending the laws of na-  
 “ tions ; nay, they *entertained* the *honor-*  
 “ *able hopes* of *Englishmen*, that the *mini-*  
 “ *stry*

" *stry of England would not cease to de-*  
 " *mand an indemnification for the loss of*  
 " *that merchandize, which had been un-*  
 " *justly taken from them ; and reparati-*  
 " *on for the insult and long imprison-*  
 " *ment of their persons : expectations be-*  
 " *coming men, who value their liber-*  
 " *ties, properties, and nation's honour :*  
 " *in this they were deceived, the true spirit*  
 " *of an English minister no longer dwelt*  
 " *amongst us. The ambassador at Paris,*  
 " *instead of demanding these subjects of his*  
 " *master, as men unjustly held in prison,*  
 " *and reparation for the wrongs they had re-*  
 " *ceived, was ordered by the ministry to*  
 " *solicit, as a favour from the court of*  
 " *France, the discharge of them only, acknow-*  
 " *ledging their offence."*

Thus he relates, and circumstantiates,  
 the fact: and here I beg leave to remark,  
 that when the circumstances, on which  
 alone a charge is founded, are absolutely  
 false, all reflections upon them must be  
 utterly absurd and impertinent. But when  
 those reflections, aimed too at persons of  
 the highest rank, of the greatest emi-  
 nence in this nation, are delivered in a  
 stile of the most indecent and furious  
 railing;

railing ; what name, gentlemen, shall we bestow on their author ? Or what shall be said in reply to them ? No more, I think, than what Beralde, in the *Malade Imaginaire* of Moliere, answers to the apothecary. Allez, Monsieur ; on voit bien que vous n'avez pas accoutumé de parler à des visages. Here however they follow, in his own words still :

“ Were not your sovereign's rights and  
 “ your own privileges *shamefully given*  
 “ up ? Were not the lands on the Ohio  
 “ *confessed* to belong to France ? Were not  
 “ the French justified in imprisoning your  
 “ fellow-subjects, and confiscating their  
 “ effects, by this *tame* behaviour of the  
 “ British minister ?” He resumes the same  
 subject, page 8, and asserts, “ That the  
 “ minister's *timidly* beseeching as a favour,  
 “ what he had a right to demand as *jus-*  
 “ *tice* from the French, has given that  
 “ nation a better foundation to the claim  
 “ of the Ohio.” In about fifteen lines  
 lower, he asserts again, “ That the *timi-*  
 “ *dity* of the minister gave the French no  
 “ foundation at all.” But he has not yet  
 done with this favourite topic. He goes  
 on to say, “ If it be asked, whence it  
 “ comes

“ comes to pass that this behaviour of the  
 “ British minister has never been *mention-*  
 “ *ed* in the French *memorials*, *relative* to  
 “ the *disputes* in *America* ? It may be an-  
 “ swered, *with truth*, that they reserve it  
 “ *only* between the British minister and  
 “ themselves ; lest a *public declaration* of this  
 “ affair might *remove him* from the *admi-*  
 “ *nistration*, and the French monarch lose  
 “ an ally of greater consequence to his  
 “ success, than any potentate in Europe !”

Here then we join issue : and let his credit with the public for veracity and candor, in whatever else he asserts through his libel, be determined by the truth or falsehood of the fact before us. This demand, gentlemen, is fair and equitable : you see he affirms it in the most undoubting terms, and remarks upon it in a language that not even certainty itself could warrant. But to the point :

On a motion made to the peers, the twentieth of *February*, one thousand seven hundred and fifty six, certain papers and letters concerning the encroachments of the French on his majesty's subjects in North America, were laid before the house. As their authenticity is incontrovertible, I  
 have

have only the easy task of copying them faithfully for your full satisfaction.

Extract of a letter from the earl of Albemarle, to the earl of Holderness ;

Paris, 19th Febru- }  
ary, 1 March, } 1752.

“ I must acquaint your lordship, that,  
“ in the month of November I received a  
“ letter from three persons, signing them-  
“ selves, John Patton, Luke Erwin, and  
“ Thomas Bourke; representing to me,  
“ that they were English-men, who had  
“ been brought to Rochelle, and put into  
“ prison there, from whence they wrote :  
“ having been taken by the French sub-  
“ jects, who seized their effects, as they  
“ were trading with the English and other  
“ Indians on the river Ohio, and carried  
“ them prisoners to Quebec; from whence  
“ they have been sent over to Rochelle,  
“ where they are hardly used. Upon this  
“ information I applied to Mr. St. Con-  
“ test, and gave him a note of it, CLAIM-  
“ ING THEM, as the KING’S SUBJECTS,  
“ and DEMANDING their liberty, and the

“ RE-

“ RESTITUTION of their effects that had  
 “ been *unjustly* taken from them.

“ These three persons, I find by the paper  
 “ your lordship has sent me, are of the num-  
 “ ber of those demanded of the French by  
 “ Mr. Clinton, and named in Mr. de la  
 “ Jonquiere's letter. I have wrote to a  
 “ merchant at Rochelle to enquire after  
 “ them, and to supply them with money  
 “ to make their journey hither, if they are  
 “ not gone; that I may receive from them  
 “ all the informations necessary. On my  
 “ seeing Mr. St. Contest, next Tuesday, I will  
 “ *represent* the case to him, in *obedience*  
 “ to his majesty's *commands*, that la Jon-  
 “ quiere may have *positive orders*, to desist  
 “ from the *unjustifiable* proceedings com-  
 “ plained of; to *release* any of his maje-  
 “ sty's subjects he may still detain in pri-  
 “ son, and make *ample restitution* of their  
 “ *effects*. And I shall take care to shew  
 “ him the *absolute necessity* of sending in-  
 “ *structions* to their several governors, not  
 “ to *attempt* any such *encroachments* for the  
 “ future.”

Ex-

Extract of a letter from the earl of Al-  
bemarle to the earl of Holderneſſe ;

26th February, }  
8th March, } 1752.

“ I am now to acquaint your lordſhip,  
“ that I ſaw Monſieur Rouillé yeſterday ;  
“ and that having drawn up a note of the  
“ *ſeveral complaints* I had received orders to  
“ make of la Jonquiere’s conduct, I delivered  
“ it to him, and told him, in general,  
“ the contents of it ; *inſiſting* on the neceſ-  
“ ſity, for preſerving the good underſtand-  
“ ing betwixt his majeſty and the moſt  
“ chriſtian king, of *ſending ſuch poſitive or-*  
“ *ders* to all their governors, as might ef-  
“ *fectually prevent*, for the future, any ſuch  
“ encroachments on his majeſty’s *ter-*  
“ *ritories*, and *committing ſuch violences* on  
“ his *ſubjects*, as had been done in the  
“ paſt.

“ I added to my remonſtrance, that I  
“ hoped they would be taken into conſidera-  
“ tion quickly ; that he might be able to  
“ give me an answer next week, or as ſoon  
“ afterwards as he poſſibly could. This  
“ miniſter told me, he would uſe his beſt  
“ endeavours for that purpoſe ; aſſured me  
“ it was the intention of his court to pre-

“ vent any disputes arising, that might  
 “ tend to alter the present correspondence  
 “ between the two nations; and that I  
 “ might *depend* upon such *orders* being  
 “ sent to their governors accordingly.

“ Of the *three men*, I mentioned to your  
 “ lordship in my letter of last week, that  
 “ had been brought *prisoners* from Canada  
 “ to Rochelle, *whom I sent for to come to*  
 “ *Paris*, TWO of them are ARRIVED, and  
 “ the THIRD is GONE to London. I will  
 “ take such informations from them as  
 “ may be necessary for my own instructi-  
 “ on, to *support* their *receiving satisfaction*  
 “ for the injuries that have been done  
 “ them.”

Translation of part of the memorial de-  
 livered by lord Albemarle to Mr.  
 Rouillé, on the 7th March, 1752.

\* As to the fort which the French have  
 undertaken to build on the river Niagara,  
 and as to the six Englishmen who have  
 been made prisoners; lord Albemarle is  
*ordered*

\* Quant à la forteresse que les François ont enterpris  
 de construire sur la riviere Oniagara, et aux six An-  
 glois qui ont été arretés, Milord Albemarle est char-

*ordered by his court to demand, that the most express orders be sent to Mr. de la Jonquiere, to desist from such unjust proceedings, and in particular to cause the fort above mentioned, to be immediately razed; and the French and others in their alliance, who may happen to be there, to retire forthwith: as likewise to set the six Englishmen at liberty, and to make them ample satisfaction for the wrongs and losses they have suffered; and lastly, that the persons who have committed these excesses, be punished in such a manner as may serve for an example to those, who might hereafter venture on any like attempt.*

I have now, gentlemen, let you into the truth of this transaction; which the pamphleteer assures you was little known, till he explained, that is, till he falsified it

gé par sa cour de demander, que des orders les plus express soient envoyés à Mr. de la Jonquiere de se desister des procedés aussi injustes; et particulièrement de faire raser immédiatement la forteresse dont il est question, et de faire retirer les François, ou autres peuples, leur alliés, qui s'y trouveroient: comme aussi de faire rendre aux six Anglois et leur liberté et une ample réparation des torts et des pertes qu' on leur a fait souffrir. Et enfin, que les personnes qui ont commis ces excès soient punis d'une maniere à servir d'exemple à ceux qui auroient envie à l'avenir de faire une pareille tentative.

in

in every particular but one, and that nothing at all to the purpose of calumny. Is this then the advocate of the people of England? Is it thus he informs our judgments first, to set our passions afterwards on the side of truth and public spirit?

Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget.

I had intended to drop this writer here; but, on looking into the very next page of his pamphlet, I find that the second fact he asserts is stated as falsely and ignorantly as this, which you have seen so unanswerably confuted. It is concerning the Ohio company. To pass over the miserable puerilities of the French king and Scylla, of a quaker and Charybdis, with which he aims at enlivening his tale, I will state the fact shortly and truly: by which you will find, gentlemen, that he had not the smallest knowledge of the affair he was writing about; that he is utterly unacquainted with the nature and forms of business; and that no blame, in this matter, can be possibly imputed to the minister, whom he has abused with

such a profusion of low and illiberal malice ; nor to any other person in the administration.

In the year 1747, Sir William Gooch, lieutenant-governor of Virginia, acquainted the board of trade, that he had been lately much solicited by several persons in partnership, for grants of lands lying on the western-side of the great mountains ; and begged of their lordships to be informed of the royal pleasure on that head. Hereupon his majesty, by order in council, was pleased to refer it to the board of trade ; with directions to consider, whether it might be for his service, and the advantage of the colony, to empower the lieutenant-governor to make such grants of lands. In 1748 the board of trade made their report ; and gave it as their opinion, That the settlement of the country lying to the westward of the great mountains in the colony of Virginia, will be for his majesty's interest, and the advantage and security of that and the neighbouring provinces ; in as much as the British subjects will be thereby enabled to cultivate a friendship, and carry on a more extensive

commerce with the nations of Indians inhabiting those parts : and such settlements may likewise be a proper step towards disappointing the views, and checking the encroachments of the French ; as it will interrupt part of the communication by lodgments on the great lakes to the river Mississipp. Their lordships therefore were of opinion, that all due encouragement ought to be given to the extending the British settlements beyond the great mountains ; and submit, whether it may not be advisable to empower the lieutenant-governor to make the grants desired, upon condition—That four years be allowed them to survey, and pay rights for the lands, upon the return of the plans to the secretary's office ; and that a fort be built, and a garrison placed, at the expence of the grantees.

This report having been taken into consideration by the lords of the committee of council, they agreed in opinion with the board of trade ; and directed that board to prepare a draught of an instruction to the lieutenant-governor conformable to their report ; which was

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accordingly

accordingly done, and laid before the council.

In the mean time, a petition was presented to the king by Mr. Hanbury, in behalf of himself, and several others, for settling the countries upon the Ohio; praying that his majesty would be pleased to encourage the undertaking, by directing the governor of Virginia to grant them a certain tract of ground; on condition, among others, of their seating a certain number of families upon the land, and erecting a fort, and maintaining a garrison, for the protection of the settlement.

This petition being referred to the board of trade, it appeared to them, that the former application was part of the present proposal, and made by the same persons; and that it might be for his majesty's service to comply with it. Accordingly the draught of an instruction was approved in council, and transmitted to the lieutenant-governor.

The president of the council of Virginia, in a letter to the board of trade in 1749, after setting forth the difficulties the Ohio company laboured under from the  
fickleness

fickleness of the Indians, the claims of the Penſylvanians with reſpect to limits, the expence of erecting and garrifoning a fort, &c. begs for ſome further indulgences ; and ſhews, that the French claim to the Miſſiſſippi is not juſt, as being contrary to the original grant of Charles I. to Sir Robert Heath, which was followed by a ſettlement of the Engliſh long before the French had been in thoſe parts.

It does not appear that any further application was made by the Ohio company with reſpect to their grant till 1754 ; when they preſented a petition to his majeſty, reciting the former tranſactions, and their proceedings ſince his majeſty's inſtructions relative to their grants ; and ſetting forth the difficulties they had met with ; and, among others, that the late governor and council had made out large grants to private perſons, to the amount of near 1,400,000 acres ; which lands not being properly deſcribed and limited, might have interfered with the lands diſcovered and choſen by the company : they therefore pray, that, upon conditions ſpecified in the petition, their bounds may be fixed by certain rivers, &c. which they name.

But it appearing to the board of trade, that the limits mentioned in the petition would include too great a quantity of land, their lordships were of opinion, that it should not be complied with; and they proposed some instructions to the governor relative to this affair in their report. *But this report still remains under the consideration of the council; and no order at all has been made on it to this day.*

I now descend at once into the subject of this letter, by observing that it were an absolute waste of your time, to shew you either the justice or the necessity of the present war, on our part. It is fresh in every man's remembrance, that the whole body of our people, the commercial part more especially, were unanimous and even clamorous for it; as a war to be made in support of our own interests solely, without any bias towards those of ungrateful or indolent allies. The current of parliament too ran violently the same way: and the administration would have been looked upon as enemies to their country, had they opposed or even retarded this favorite measure. They did neither. They seized the first justifiable occasion of beginning it;  
and

and they supported what was thus begun, with all the alacrity of preparation, and all the vigor of execution. Let the facts, for those alone are evidence, prove this assertion, in detail.

In the beginning of January 1755, the duke of Mirepoix returned to England, with the greatest professions of the sincere desire of his court, to adjust, finally and expeditiously, all disputes subsisting in America between the two crowns. It was, therefore, with the utmost surprize, that our sovereign received, at this very time, undoubted intelligence of the French having actually dispatched orders to Brest and Rochfort for arming a considerable fleet; without any communication made by the court of Versailles, or their ambassador, to his majesty, of it's object or destination. This mysterious and extraordinary step, on the part of France, could not fail to be attended with a general alarm here; and made it indispensably necessary for the king to cause such a number of ships of war to be equipped, as might frustrate any attempts of France, and protect, at the same time, the British rights and dominions. This was done. The utmost efforts

efforts were exerted, and with such success, that before the end of April, our fleet was ready to put to sea. It actually sailed too the twenty-second of that month, under the command of vice-admiral Boscawen. The strength of his squadron was as follows.

| Guns.                             |       | } 11<br>Line. | Ships: | Men.<br>5945 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------|--------|--------------|
| Of                                | 74    |               |        |              |
|                                   | 70    |               |        |              |
|                                   | 64    |               |        |              |
|                                   | 60    |               |        |              |
|                                   | 50    | 1             |        |              |
|                                   | Sloop | 1 Frigate.    |        |              |
| May the 9th, sent with dispatches |       |               |        | 140          |
|                                   | 24    | 1             |        |              |

We had at the same time, without leaving our coasts unguarded or exposed, a reinforcement in readiness to follow the vice-admiral; as it in fact did, upon the earliest intelligence of the French fleet being sailed from Brest.

May the 11th, sailed with rear-admiral Holburne,

|    |       |   |     |        |      |
|----|-------|---|-----|--------|------|
|    | Guns. |   |     |        |      |
| Of | 74    | 1 | } 6 | Ships. | Men. |
|    | 70    | 4 |     |        |      |
|    | 60    | 1 |     |        |      |
|    | 24    | 1 |     |        |      |
|    |       |   |     | 7      | 3170 |

This was about eight days after Monsieur de Macnamara sailed with eighteen ships of the line and eight frigates, which had been fitted out at Brest and Rochfort.

You all know, that Monsieur de Macnamara, after being out at sea some days, returned with six ships of the line and three frigates. So that seventeen proceeded to North America; whereof, three of the line and three frigates were *armés en guerre*: ten were only *armés en flute*, as they term it; that is, they had no other than their upper-deck guns, and served as transports to carry their troops. The seventeenth was to be used as an hospital ship.

As the British squadron sailed ten days before the French, it was improbable that they should meet on the European seas; but they saw, and fell in with each other, more than once, on the coast of North-America.

Before we mention what happened there, I beg to be indulged in making one

or two remarks, which the subject we are upon naturally suggests. Every child in politics knows—that, after receiving orders as to the nature of the service he is to be employed in, and as to his general destination, the commanding officer, in all very distant expeditions, is, and must be intrusted with a discretionary power; first, to chuse such particular stations, as may be most proper to effect the business intended; and to vary them afterwards, according as different exigencies arise, or as the earliest intelligence he can obtain may render it adviseable. Now, that such was the general purport and tenor of the orders given to every admiral, for every service, since the commencement of this war; and that there was nothing, in their most secret instructions, contradictory to what is here advanced, may be affirmed, with the severest regard to truth. But you must be sensible, that, to lay before the public, instructions of such a nature, even were it in my power to do so, is a step of too delicate a nature for any private man to take. However just they may be in themselves, however warranted by the laws of reason and self-defence; the war, that occasioned  
them,

them, is still carrying on. To men of sense and honor no more needs be said on this head, at present: and, were I enabled to lay before readers of a different character, all that truth would warrant me in saying, but that prudence forbids, it would avail nothing. You are already persuaded, that cavil and abuse, not information, is all they wish to find on any subject, even on those where our nearest and most essential interests are to be discussed.

My second remark is, that, whenever an administration makes use of means duly proportioned to the end proposed, and chuses for obtaining such end men of acknowledged abilities in their profession, fully instructed and empowered to act, they have done their duty: and, however unfortunate the issue may be, they stand acquitted of all demerit to the public. No minister was ever supposed to be the master of events: and the sea—(is it necessary I should make so trite an observation, gentlemen?)—continues the most inconstant of all the elements. If our vice-admiral could not intercept the whole French fleet, either in it's passage to North America or in it's return to Europe; is the Atlantic no wider  
than

than the channel between Dover and Calais? Are there no storms to vex, no dark nights, no excessive and continuing fogs to obscure that immense ocean? and to render the taking, or even seeing an enemy's ships, impossible? But they did not all escape his vigilance. Both squadrons saw and fell in with each other more than once on the American coast; tho the fogs, so frequent and thick in that latitude, separated them before they could come near enough to engage. One part however he came up with, and took two ships, the Alcide and the Lys, of 64 guns each, the latter having on board four companies of the queen's regiment, four of the regiment of Languedoc; and, divided betwixt both, about seven thousand six hundred pounds sterling, for the payment of the troops.

Mr. Boscawen was joined on the 21st of June by rear-admiral Holburne. The same day he advanced within a mile of Louisbourg harbour, and seeing there four large ships and two frigates, he knew that Monsieur du Perrier had out-failed him and was safe in port. He then proceeded to his rendezvous, being the best adapted for preventing the squadron under Monsieur de la Motte from getting  
into

into the Gulph of St. Lawrence ; though this too, under cover of fogs and by hard gales of wind, had the good fortune to arrive at the place of its destination. The ships, under Mr. Boscawen's command, becoming now very sickly, he went to Halifax, there to send on shore and refresh the sailors that were no longer fit for service : and he left rear-admiral Holburne with five or six ships cruizing off Louisbourg. But the same distempers began to discover themselves, and to spread amongst this part of our fleet likewise ; Mr. Holburne burying no less than two hundred men out of his own ship : and, in the whole squadron, we lost upwards of two thousand. This was owing to the severity of the weather at their first coming upon the coast, and to the pernicious humidity of the fogs, which commonly inflames and renders mortal the fever attending seamen, at the first sitting out of a fleet.

That part of the French squadron, which had gone to Quebec, escaped back to Europe in the month of September, through the Streight of Bellisle. By this streight is to be understood the channel, which separates Newfoundland from the  
continent

continent of America, running north-west and south-west; an unfrequented and very hazardous navigation, which had never before been attempted by any fleet or squadron of ships. Whilst Mr. Holburne continued cruizing before Louisbourg, the strong gales of wind at the fall of the year, often drove him many leagues to leeward, which gave the French an opportunity of coming out as they did. On the twentieth of September he came up with three of their ships, one of which separated from the rest and was chased, tho she could not be overtaken, by the Centurion and Litchfield. The Edinburgh, Dunkirk and Norwich pursued the other two, and the Dunkirk came near them, but directly to windward; so that, as there was no prospect of assistance from the rest, she was called off by the admiral. The other ship that had been left at Louisbourg, I mean the Esperance of seventy-four guns, was taken in her return to Brest by some of those under the command of rear-admiral West.

This, gentlemen, is a plain deduction of facts, naked of all ornament and artifice. On one hand, nothing has been kept back from your view, by being  
thrown

thrown into shades: nothing on the other has been brought forwards, to be set in a light too strong or too advantageous. Though of these two vitious extremes, the last, as things are at present circumstanced, would be perhaps the most pardonable fault: for I should rank myself among the worst of mankind, as not deserving the common benefits of air and water, much less the privileges of a free *Briton*, if from levity or malice, I should debase my pen so far, as to unsettle the affections of my fellow-subjects, by spreading lies of men; merely because they are ministers; or to inflame the calamities of my country, merely to shew my talent in ridicule and ribaldry. *Hic niger est*: and the people of England would have more reason to be on their guard against the insuflions of such a writer, than against the miscreant who had betrayed his friend, or attempted the life of his father. But let us now proceed to enquire what was doing in the mean while nearer home.

Our object, as you have seen, was the intercepting of the French fleet. The same plan, which had succeeded so well in the last war, was pursued in this; the same

officers, who had distinguished themselves then, were employed now, but the issue was still uncertain, and in the hands of providence alone. That the administration, therefore, during those five or six months of uncertainty, might leave nothing undone on their part, it was resolved to stop all French ships homeward or outward bound, and bring them into our ports: And thus, if the expedition to America should not fully answer our expectations, we should yet have in our hands the greatest number possible of their vessels and sailors, who would, otherwise, most undoubtedly be employed against us. May I for once assume the tone so common to the rabble of our politicians, and assert positively, that our safety, at that very hazardous conjuncture, was owing solely to this measure? Instead of this, I will only beg leave to remark, that had the *three hundred ships and eight thousand seamen*, taken by us before Christmas, arrived safe in France, they might have transported hither so formidable a force, and in so short a time, that those, who have since pretended to ridicule the attempt, would have been, at that moment, the first to tremble at.

But

But the damage we have occasioned to their commerce, by pursuing this measure, deserves a particular consideration. It cannot be denied, that, while our own trade never was better nor more generally protected, in any period during a war; the trade of our enemies never suffered more, at the same time. The consequence of which has been, that the advanced price of insurance upon merchant-ships since the commencement of the present war is very inconsiderable on our part; and that the French are under a necessity of insuring theirs, the outward bound at 30 to 35 per cent. and the homeward bound at 40 to 55 per cent.—a load so unequal and ruinous, that the most flourishing commerce must sink under it soon, perhaps irrecoverably. This their merchants foretold; and it is the true source of that aversion from the war, and of those uneasy murmurings which have spread themselves from the most remote provinces to the capital, from the very peasants to the first parliament of their monarchy.—But let us intermit for a while such remarks as these, however true and pertinent; as this seems a proper place, gentlemen, to set before you, in one view, an abstract of all the squadrons sent out

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On

On the 24th of July 1755, sailed with Sir Edward Hawke, to cruize to the westward, and followed him shortly after,

| Guns. |       |   | } 18 Two of these followed him<br>the beginning of August. |
|-------|-------|---|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Of    | 90    | 2 |                                                            |
|       | 80    | 2 |                                                            |
|       | 74    | 1 |                                                            |
|       | 70    | 8 |                                                            |
|       | 66    | 1 |                                                            |
|       | 60    | 3 |                                                            |
|       | 50    | 1 |                                                            |
|       | 44    | 1 |                                                            |
|       | Sloop | 1 |                                                            |

Sailed at the same time to cruize to the westward,

|    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| Of | 70 | 1 |
|    | 60 | 1 |

And a few days afterwards,

|    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| Of | 60 | 1 |
|----|----|---|

On the 29th September 1755, Sir Edward Hawke returned into port with some of his Squadron. Some came in about ten days before, and two or three of them a few days afterwards.

On the 14th of October 1755, vice-admiral Byng sailed from St. Helen's to cruize to the westward. His squadron, including such ships as were sent out after him, was as follows,

|    | Guns.  |    |      |
|----|--------|----|------|
| Of | 90     | 1  | } 22 |
|    | 74     | 1  |      |
|    | 70     | 11 |      |
|    | 66     | 1  |      |
|    | 64     | 1  |      |
|    | 60     | 5  |      |
|    | 50     | 2  |      |
|    | 44     | 1  |      |
|    | 24     | 3  |      |
|    | Sloops | 2  |      |

About the middle of November 1755, vice-admiral Boscawen returned to England, with thirteen sail of the line, and two frigates.

On the 22d of the same month, vice-admiral Byng returned to Spithead; and most of his squadron entered into port about the same time. One of the 70 gun ships came in the 4th of November; one did not return till the 9th of December; and two continued out four days after that.

On

On the 30th of January 1756, vice-admiral Osborn failed to cruize to the westward, with the following ships.

|    | Guns. |    |      |
|----|-------|----|------|
| Of | 70    | 10 | } 13 |
|    | 66    | 1  |      |
|    | 60    | 1  |      |
|    | 50    | 1  |      |
|    | Sloop | 1  |      |

On the 16th February, he returned with them to Spithead.

On the 12th March 1756, Sir Edward Hawke failed to cruize to the westward from St. Helen's, with part of the following ships, and was joined by the others off Plymouth.

|    | Guns. |   |      |
|----|-------|---|------|
| Of | 90    | 1 | } 14 |
|    | 74    | 1 |      |
|    | 70    | 7 |      |
|    | 60    | 3 |      |
|    | 50    | 2 |      |
|    | 24    | 3 |      |
|    | Sloop | 1 |      |

On the 6th April 1756, admiral Byng failed for the Mediterranean from St. Helen's, with the following ships :

|    | Guns. |   |      |
|----|-------|---|------|
| Of | 90    | 1 | } 10 |
|    | 74    | 1 |      |
|    | 70    | 3 |      |
|    | 66    | 1 |      |
|    | 64    | 2 |      |
|    | 60    | 2 |      |

Having thus laid before you, which any man may verify even from the common news-papers, a list of the ships employed, at different times, and in different services, during the last year and the beginning of this ; it may not be unnecessary here to take some notice of the cruize made by our western squadron ; as much licentious invective hath been thrown out at random on that topic, by those who of all men knew least what they were to condemn or approve.

The design in sending out this squadron, was not only to endeavour the intercepting of Du Guay's ; but those likewise of La Motte and Salvert, in case they should escape our fleet in North America. Du Guay having gone to Lisbon and Cadiz, where he wasted much time, rendered the conjecture extremely probable that he was to join those other squadrons, in their  
return,

return, at some fixed rendezvous, and by that means secure their safe entry into the ports of France. It was therefore judged prudent to send out a squadron sufficient to intercept them in case of their junction: and it was left to the discretion of the admiral to keep in such station as would most effectually prevent their getting into harbour; unless, from any intelligence he might receive, he should find it necessary to proceed to the southward, as a more probable station to meet them. But Du Guay, on coming back, kept out in the ocean, much to the westward of Cape Finisterre, till he came into the latitude of Brest. There he continued cruising till the wind was fair, and gave him an opportunity of running down the latitude directly into port; by which he escaped the vigilance of our squadron, then crossing the Bay of Biscay: and the ships from North America returning by themselves, one was taken; another of greatly-superior force engaged by one of our cruising frigates; and a third escaped, by our ship that chased carrying away her topmast.

These

These different and necessary steps on the part of Great Britain, produced, and could not fail of producing in the French an ardent desire of revenge. You well remember the critical situation of this country during the last winter. Their squadrons, after only a common passage to and from America, in which by consequence they could have suffered very little, were all returned, and in harbour. Great bodies of their troops were drawn down, and spread themselves along the coasts of Picardy, Normandy, and Britany, threatening a descent either in this island or Ireland. Of this we had repeated and sure intelligence. We knew likewise that they meditated an invasion of Minorca; which, by the treaty of Utrecht, they had solemnly guarantied to England against all powers whatever. I say, that all this was early known to the government; who therefore were not so ill informed as hundreds, that do not believe what they publish, have dared to assert; nor will they be found so reproachably negligent in their preparations as well-meaning credulity in some, misled by the insidious malice of a few, has been unfortunately persuaded to believe.

But,

But, were the writer of this letter actually possessed of all the secret intelligence necessary to prove what is here asserted, the exposing of such intelligence at this time would be premature and hazardous. It would be to copy after the pernicious example of some other writers, who, while they pretend to inform you, afford real and dangerous information only to your enemies. Let it suffice, then, for the present to say, that, by a letter from abroad, dated the 24th of last December, which I accidentally read in the original, it appeared the French were then going upon the equipment of a squadron at Toulon; and that this squadron was to consist of twelve ships of the line. Those ships were, in effect, got ready in about two months after the intelligence came; and sailed to support the attack upon Minorca, where they arrived the 18th of April.

Our Mediterranean squadron, under admiral Byng, had put to sea from the road of St. Helens\*, twelve days before; and arrived, in three and forty days †, off the same island.

\* April 6th.      † May 19th.

Here doubtless, it will be, as it has been often already, asked, why there was not a squadron in the Mediterranean early enough to have blocked up the French fleet in port, or to have intercepted it in its passage to Minorca: and why, for this most necessary service, it did not sail from hence by the beginning of March, at the latest? It will be asked again, why this squadron, even when joined with the three already in those seas, was superior in number to the French fleet, by only one ship of the line? I have stated the questions fairly, gentlemen; and I will answer them with the strictest regard to truth.

To do this effectually, it is proper to take a review of the state of our navy, during the autumn and a part of the winter, 1755. In those months, thirty-one ships of the line had been employed in cruising to the westward; as you may satisfy yourselves by casting your eyes back on the list, already laid before you; these had, almost all, returned into port, distressed by sickness, and otherwise in a very disabled condition. For, from the unseasonable weather, they had suffered extreme damage

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damage in their masts, sails, yards and rigging.

Vice-admiral Boscawen, with the ships under his command, to the number of thirteen of the line, did not return from North America, till about the middle of November. Among those several were in bad condition: most of them had suffered greatly in their masts, yards, rigging; as the whole squadron was quite bare of stores, and very deficient in their complements by death and severe illnesses among the sailors. This was the shattered state of almost our whole fleet at home. To this true but melancholy detail, must be added that uninterrupted series of storms and turbulent weather under every appearance, which, till near the end of January, cruelly distinguished the last from every preceding winter, for almost forty years backwards. These inevitable accidents greatly retarded the cure of our sick men, as well as obstructed the refitting our ships, and bringing them again into a proper condition for service. Considerable numbers too had died during the winter, or were become unfit for duty, or had deserted: so that, tho all the accustomed methods of manning a fleet

fleet had been exhausted, and others, not common used, put in practice; yet still the progress made, towards compleating the numbers wanted, was very unequal to the necessity. To this train of unhappy circumstances it was owing that only twenty-five ships of the line, excluding three destined for convoys with our outward bound trade, could possibly be got ready for service, by the middle of January \*. Of these twenty-five, thirteen were ordered to sea, under Mr. Osborne, to accompany the convoys, just now mentioned, into a proper latitude westward, for their security against whatever the French squadron at Brest might attempt against them. They sailed January the 30th, and returned to Spithead sixteen days afterwards.

In † twelve days from their return, a squadron under Sir Edward Hawke, consisting of fourteen ships of the line, with three frigates and a sloop, appointed to attend some East-India ships into the ocean and then to cruize off Brest, was got ready to put to sea, tho the weather prevented their sailing till near the middle of March ‡.

\* Jan. 16th. † Feb. 28th. ‡ Mar. 12th.

Now

Now it appears, by a true state of our fleet, that not fewer than forty-nine ships were employed at the beginning of this month, for indispensable home-services, whereof eighteen were of the line, and thirty-one were frigates, &c. These had their stations in the Downs and parts adjacent, or on the opposite coasts of France; or were employed as convoys, and in raising men; or actually cruising to the westward. It appears likewise from the same list that, at this time, there remained in port, not under orders to proceed to sea, forty-six ships of the line; and of them, only twenty were in condition for service, had their due numbers of men been complete; but in these they were deficient by two thousand two hundred and fifty-six. The complements of the other twenty-six ships amounted to thirteen thousand two hundred and sixty: of which they mustered no more than five thousand seven hundred and forty-eight. But from this number, deducting the officers, petty officers and servants, there remained only about two thousand two hundred foremastmen: and as there could be no other immediate way of furnishing out the complements of the twenty ships, ready in all  
other

other respects; it is undeniably evident that the doing so would have stripped the other twenty-six of almost all their foremast men. Need I intreat, gentlemen, your serious attention to these particulars? You see they are not rashly adopted from uncertain rumors or deceitful suggestions: they are all drawn from vouchers that will be their own undoubted evidence. Observe likewise, if you please, that the French, at the latter part of the winter, had between thirty and forty ships of 80, 74, and 64 guns; besides several from 60 to 50 guns, lately built and well-conditioned, in their ports of Brest and Rochfort. We knew they were exerting their utmost endeavours to get as many of them as was possible ready for the sea. We knew besides, as has been said before, that they were drawing down from different parts, formidable bodies of troops, and extending them along their coasts; and that they had a number of what is called small craft in several ports of their maritime provinces.

By this disposition of their force at land and sea, they had it continually in their power to insult this island, the very moment that our inferiority should furnish them  
the

the wished-for occasion. Had a descent been then attempted; had they even sacrificed fifteen or twenty thousand men in the attempt, what must have been the consequence to this great capital? I chuse, however, to throw a total veil over the scene in my eye: and you, gentlemen, feel intimately my reasons for doing so. I know that this invasion has been treated, even by some men of sense amongst us, as chimerical; but I know too, that no good reason has ever been assigned by any man, for treating it as such.

The administration indeed did not look upon it as a measure taken absolutely at Versailles, nor as the only one in the plan of that ambitious court. They were fully apprized of the preparations carrying on, during the same period, at Toulon: and they were aware that either of these schemes might prove the feint or reality, might be carried into execution or dropped, just as our adversaries should find either most practicable and of surest execution. They might attack Minorca, we knew; or they might fail through the Straits of Gibraltar, either to succour their colonies in North-America, or to put our fleet in the ocean be-

twixt the two fires of their Brest and Toulon squadron. Under these alternatives of danger and distress, when it is evident too, from the state of our navy above recited, that every possible evil could not be guarded against; would any thinking man, who weighs coolly the sum and consequence of things, have wished an administration to leave, at such a juncture, the head and heart of the commonwealth in greatest danger? these vital parts, where a wound is often mortal, most exposed, only to save a limb?

But our most vigorous endeavours however were used to secure this part of the British dominions likewise; as well as to send out an additional force, sufficient for the defence of our colonies. Orders were issued the 2d and 3d of March \* for pressing

\* It has been asked, why such orders were not issued sooner. The answer is obvious and reasonable. March is the ordinary season for fitting out and for the departure of ships: and therefore had the general press begun sooner, or in any part of the winter, it would have had no other effect than only to alarm the men; drive them away into lurking-places up and down the country, from whence no encouragements could have drawn them afterwards: and thus a premature attempt would have in a great measure defeated the very purpose it was intended to serve.

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men from all protections, and for laying an embargo on all merchant-ships ; to answer, by these extraordinary methods, the urgent call for a sufficient number of hands. Ten sail of the line were ordered to be equipped forthwith for the Mediterranean, and quickly after six sail more were appointed for North-America, the West-Indies, and the coast of Africa. All which, as soon as they were ready and the weather would permit, proceeded according to their several destinations. From this fair deduction of particulars, it follows clearly, that a squadron of equal strength could not have been sooner dispatched to the Mediterranean consistently with that first and superior attention which is due to the security of this kingdom. And thus much in reply to the first question. I proceed now to consider the second popular objection, that has been raised on the head we are still examining.

The ill success of our Mediterranean squadron has given occasion to say, that a greater force should have been sent. Let us see then whether we could have reasonably spared more ships at that time ; and to judge of this, we must look impartially

into the state of our fleet at home, just before the squadron in question put to sea.

Exclusive of it, and six ships more for the colonies, there remained either cruising or going to cruise twenty six; and in harbour twenty four, not under sailing orders. Of the latter, nine only were otherwise ready, could they have been manned; but they wanted of their complement above eleven hundred; and the six ships designed for the colonies wanted three hundred and seventy seven. The remaining fifteen of the twenty four in harbour were either fitting or refitting. They mustered but about eight hundred foremast men; near four hundred of which being wanted for the ships going to the colonies, there would remain scarce more than four hundred to be distributed amongst the nine ships, ready in all respects except men: a number not nearly sufficient for those nine. However, by stripping one ship of all her hands, it would have been just possible to mann the other eight. And then, thirty four ships of the line were the whole force we had to employ in services at home: of which, it was now judged indispensably necessary to have nine-

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teen cruising before Brest and Rochfort. We had sure intelligence, that the strength of our enemies was greatly increased in those parts; and that vigorous preparations were continued there for acquiring a strength still more formidable, which demanded a greater number of our ships to prevent or frustrate whatever might be attempted against these islands. Things standing thus, all the reasons above deduced, for not sending any ships to the Mediterranean before the first of March, remain here in full force for not farther weakning, now, the fleet at home; more especially as there was not the least apparent necessity for our doing so. The ten sail from hence, with three already in those seas, composed a strength superior to any the French could have there, even according to the largest accounts: and, what might probably have ensured success to it, no fleet was ever sent from England more completely equipped, manned with abler or better sailors. We knew likewise the real state of our enemy's fleet; that it was far from being equally well appointed with ours, or having it's due complement of hands; and

they too, for the most part, but the sweepings and refuse of Toulon, old men past service, or boys not yet grown up to it.

Before we conclude this head, let us stop a moment to make one reflection, which appears to me of importance. The greatest errors, in reasoning on the measures of an admiralty, arise from this supposition, that the real strength of the navy is to be estimated, at all times, by the number of ships then in commission; and that every such ship can be constantly made ready to go out, and to remain always at sea. It is scarce to be credited, how generally this vulgar prejudice prevails, even among such persons, as, in other computations, are least subject to error. But it should ever be remembered by him, who would impartially examine the conduct of an admiralty, that our naval strength ought not, at any time, to be rated by the number of ships in harbour, or even in commission; but only by that part of it, which can be then effectually fitted out, and manned. Whatever ships remain incomplete in these respects, they are as useless for immediate service as if they were  
still

still in the forests, or on the mountains, where they first grew. But to go on.

With such a squadron as you have seen above, Mr. Byng sailed from Spithead to St. Helen's the third of April; and from thence, the sixth of the same month.

It is with equal shame and indignation, that I pursue the sequel of this narrative; and I could wish what remains to be told buried in deep and lasting oblivion. Not for the sake of the men in power. Had I reason to believe them culpable, I should think the scene could not be exposed too strongly, nor painted in colours too hateful. But for the disgrace brought on the British flag, and the fatal disasters consequent on that disgrace, by ONE MAN'S — but let the justice of the nation give it a name. Whoever puts himself upon his country, ought to have a fair and equal trial. To condemn the greatest supposed criminal, before such trial, were unjust; as to insult him otherwise is ungenerous, and a-kin to the very cowardice it pretends to abhor.

The admiral having delivered to the governor of Gibraltar some dispatches containing the king's orders to him; that

gentleman thought proper thereupon to call a council of war, May the 4th ; and it appears, from the minutes of this council, that it met to deliberate—not on paying obedience to his majesty's commands, which were express “ for sending to Minorca from “ the garrison at Gibraltar a detachment “ equal to a battalion ;” but to consider “ the expediency of sending any detach- “ ment at all :” a case never intended here to come under their consideration. It was not, therefore, any supposed obscurity, any seeming contradiction in the letters writ by the secretary at war, as has been since alledged, on which they assembled to debate. The orders contained in those letters were, and must have been, fully understood by them : the questions proposed, and the resolutions taken, prove invincibly that they were so. Had it been otherwise, no such suppositions could have been made, as were made ; no such conclusions drawn from them, as were drawn ; and, in a word, there would not have been the shadow of common sense in all that passed on the occasion. Their resolutions were, first, “ that the relief of Minorca “ would be hazardous, perhaps impracti- “ cable.”

“ cable.” Had our enemies reasoned in the same manner, Minorca had never been invaded ; Fort St. Philip’s never besieged. —“ Secondly, if the British fleet should “ be any way weakened by an engagement, “ Gibraltar would be in imminent danger,” But, though the British fleet was afterwards weakened, because only one half of it had been suffered to engage the whole French squadron, yet it was not beat ; and Gibraltar run no danger at all. Let us now proceed to see how this incredible event happened, and so conclude a letter, gentlemen, which has insensibly swelled into a treatise.

The British squadron sailed from Gibraltar, May the 8th ; and, after a passage of eleven days, arrived off Minorca on the 19th ; at the very time when a commander of spirit and enterprize would have wished it precisely to arrive : because such a commander had an opportunity then of engaging the enemy’s fleet, probably of ruining their whole undertaking, with most reputation to himself and most glory to his country. Could a Greenville or a Drake arise for a moment, from the dead, to pronounce upon this opinion, I am confident,  
by

by all they thought and acted upon similar occasions, that they would heartily confirm it. They would blush, at the same time, for a dastardly half-foul'd race amongst us, who treat all such notions as romantic and visionary. While this gallantry of courage, this nobleness of purpose prevailed in Britain, every scheme, that had been planned with spirit at home, was executed with answerable bravery and success abroad. But should contrary principles to these, should base and selfish views ever spread their contagion through our fleets and armies, we must, from that time, degenerate into a people of pirates and free-booters: and our very commanders, instead of soliciting employments, for the glorious dangers attending them, in order to do honor or procure safety to their country, will seek to wear the public livery from humbler motives: I mean, the mere wages and vails such employments may procure them. Be this as it will,

No sooner had the French discovered *our* fleet bearing towards Minorca, than their admiral, who best knew in what a hurry and with what unequal hands *his* squadron had been manned, sent to request a reinforcement

forcement from the duke of Richlieu's camp before Fort St. Philips. His request was complied with: and a reinforcement, to the number of six hundred men, was immediately sent off, in several tartans, to his assistance. Now, can any thing confirm more evidently what I have oftener than once insinuated, of the condition in which their fleet put to sea? And with this incident too, Mr. Byng, as appears by his letter, was fully acquainted some hours before he engaged it. There he tells us, that the morning proving hazey—he means the morning of that day \* which will be long remembered by the friends of Britain with pain, by her enemies with triumph—two of those very vessels fell in with the rear of our fleet; and one of them was actually taken by the *Defiance*, with two captains, two lieutenants, and one hundred and two private men. All the rest were obliged to return to their camp, without having been able to put a single soldier on board *Galiffoniere's* fleet. This capture, you see, was particularly encouraging, and might have been interpreted, without much superstition, into an omen

\* The 20th of May.

omen of still greater success. Had I said, into an assurance of victory, it had not, perhaps, been too much : when I consider, that every other circumstance, to confirm the bold or animate the fearful, concurred on our side : the sailors all in high spirits, the officers determined and eager to shew themselves English-men, and the gale blowing full in favour of our attack, without once changing or failing us for the rest of the day. We had time, likewise, to form our line of battle in good order, and to sail in it. As our fleet was to windward, it must tack of course ; which it did all together, through the whole extent of the line, without one blunder or one ship missing. The signal to engage was made about one o'clock ; and rear-admiral West put immediately before the wind with his division, consisting of six ships ; each ship selecting, as she sailed down, one of the enemy's ; that they might all attack regularly, and without confusion. On our first advancing, the French fired to rake us : but, from an impatience that oftener indicates apprehension than intrepidity, making their discharge at too great a distance, they did  
our

our ships little or no damage. Before they could load again, ours were pretty well in with them, and returned their fire with greater execution. But, as only six of our ships, I mean the red division, were engaged against the whole French fleet, the match must needs be unequal: And, in effect, all the six were considerably hurt: the Intrepid more particularly. For, as she had the misfortune to lose her foretopmast early; and, as by that accident, the French admiral, with his two seconds, was upon her at once, who quickly demolished all her rigging and maintopmast, she lay in the sea almost a wreck, having received fourteen shot betwixt wind and water, and many through both sides. Thus unequally, though without once intermitting her fire, was she engaged for more than an hour and a half; 'till, at last, captain Cornwall in the Revenge, and captain Durell in the Trident, broke their station from admiral Byng to put themselves between the Intrepid and her three antagonists.

But why the admiral himself lay, all this while, astern, and so prevented his own division from advancing likewise to charge the enemy, altho the same wind  
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that had brought down one half of his fleet, continued still in the same quarter full and favourable for bringing down the other half—why, or how all this happened, I can give no account: and I will not indulge a humour of forming disadvantageous conjectures. On the contrary, I detest, from my soul, those instances of aversion to him, which have been so often and so shockingly exhibited in our public streets, by that many-headed monster, the rabble; and which, in truth, are a disgrace on our national character for good nature and magnanimity. Another, and a more equitable tribunal, than that of popular fury, must determine what we are to think of this day's action, and of this gentleman's behaviour in it.

Here I had resolved to have laid down my pen, but a \* letter of a very extraordinary tendency having lately appeared, I think myself obliged to make some few remarks upon it. Not for any thing material it contains; not on account of the seditious industry with which it has been

\* A Letter to a Member of Parliament, relative to the case of Admiral Byng, with some original Papers and Letters, &c.

disperſed into every quarter of this great city, and circulated through every province of the kingdom; but becauſe the admiral has made himſelf a party and an accomplice to it, by furniſhing the writer with letters and papers, which he alone could furniſh. Had this libel tended to his own vindication only, without charging on other people a guilt of the moſt flagitious nature, he ſhould have enjoyed his whole benefit of clergy from it, without any cenſure or even notice on my part. But this anonymous advocate more than inſinuates, that one or two miniſters at leaſt have devoted his client, as the ſcape-goat of their incapacity and iniquity; and that a dark deſign is formed to murder him, meerly to ſcreen themſelves. Would it be too much, gentlemen, to demand ſome little proof of ſo high a charge? of a crime ſo enormous? But, if he has produced none, not the ſmalleſt, neither from the letters themſelves, nor from his comments on them, he ſtands already convicted of the guilt he imputes to others, as a ſtabber of reputations in the dark: and to me, ſenſible to good fame, ſuch an aſſaſſination is worſe than the loſs of life itſelf.

Or will he justify himself by saying, as Italian bravoës do, that it is his trade, and he must live by it? He is sure, besides, that Mr. Byng's character would have stood fairer in the public eye, had his letter from the Mediterranean been, at first, published entire. Tho I heartily wish it had, and am pleased it is so now: I yet differ totally in opinion from him, of it's utility towards creating, in one man of unprejudiced sense, the least better opinion of the admiral's understanding, as a writer, or of his behaviour, as a commander. Some few strictures on the added parts will be sufficient proof of what I now say.

After seven or eight pages of mere common-place invective, he proceeds to quote\* the first passage omitted in the Gazette. Now I ask, whether this part of his client's letter—when I say client, I do not mean it in the legal sense—can be of the least advantage to his character? The contrary appears to me most evident. We find him already—that is before the engagement—in despair of being able to do any thing towards the relief of *Minorca*.—"Every  
" one was of opinion we could be of no

\* Page 9th.

“ use to general Blakeney, as by all accounts no place was secured for a landing.” Is this the language of courage? Besides, we know since, that Mr. Boyd went out, in an open boat about this very time, in search of him; and returned to the castle without harm or interruption. And if he had then totally forgot, *other irreproachable witnesses* still remember, *the conversation that colonel Kane held with him formerly about the Sally-port, and on the very spot where it stands---* as a place of sure communication, through which not only intelligence but succours might be sent into the fort, even when it should be actually besieged.

Page 10th, he says, “ the Captain, Intrepid and Defiance were much damaged in their masts, so that they were endangered of not being able to secure their masts.” Now, the omission of this passage seems noway injurious to Mr. Byng; for, whatever it may be at sea, it is not English at land. He goes on, “ the squadron in general were very sickly, many killed and wounded, and no where to put a third of *their number*, if I made an hospital of the forty gun ship.” What

can he possibly mean? Was an hospital ship wanted for the killed? or even for the wounded? Or does an admiral put the sick of his squadron into an hospital ship, unless, which is not pretended, there should be some epidemical and contagious distemper, the small pox or fever for instance, spread amongst them? Does there appear any malice to Mr. Byng, in the omission of these particulars? And was the sickly condition of our fleet, supposing his account to be true, a secret fit to be trusted, at that time, with our domestic and foreign enemies?

In the next paragraph of the same page, he goes on to say, "He would make sure of protecting Gibraltar, since it was found impracticable either to succour or relieve Minorca." How could he possibly tell? He had recalled the Phoenix and Chesterfield, "before they could get quite so near the harbour as to make sure what batteries or guns might be placed to prevent our having any communication with the castle." Then he knew nothing of its being either practicable or impracticable to succour the castle; for he never made a second attempt,

tempt, not even to send in a letter ! And the garrison of Fort St. Philip's never knew that he had engaged the French at all, till they were informed of it forty days afterwards by the French themselves. His advocate goes on to quote more——  
 “ For though we may justly claim the victory.” This victory then was gained by six ships only ; the other six of his own squadron not having been suffered to engage, till two of them broke away from their stations to prevent the Intrepid from being either sunk or taken. One cannot recal this scene without feeling some emotions of honest indignation. Had he beat the French, had he given the *whole* British squadron a chance for doing it, Minorca had still been ours ; and he had brought back to England a marshal of France, with his army, our prisoners.

Whether the word “ cover ” Gibraltar was omitted or not, is immaterial to Mr. Byng's vindication. It is besides glaringly absurd. Does he not say, in his letter of the 25th of May, “ that he had gained a “ victory ? ” Did not some other hand, who has put his anger into tolerable English in a second letter, dated July 4. say  
 still

still more affirmatively, "that he fought, met, attacked, and beat the enemy?" Now, could the French come to Gibraltar without their fleet? Or was a beaten fleet in condition to engage him there? What had he then to cover? Not Gibraltar, surely.

There is a thread of sophistry which runs through the whole of this pamphlet, but so flimsily spun, that it becomes a mere cobweb: and, to use any further effort, either in untwisting or breaking it, would be lamentable waste, gentlemen, both of your time and mine. The visible drift of all this silly artifice, is to divert the attention of the public from one important object, and to fix it on others; which, whether true or false, proved or disproved, will not have the smallest influence on Mr. Byng's acquittal or condemnation. I am, with real truth and esteem,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most humble servant.

